

VZCZCXRO3279
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHAK #0203 0360922
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 050922Z FEB 08 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5124
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU
RUEUITH/TLO ANKARA TU
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5//
RHMFISS/39ABG CP INCIRLIK AB TU
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/425ABG IZMIR TU//CC//
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000203

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: POSITIVE SHIFTS IN PUBLIC OPINION

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT. The overwhelmingly positive reaction of political leaders to US-Turkey cooperation against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is now also being reflected in public opinion. Recent polls indicate that the US has reversed the downward trend in public opinion that had U.S. favorability ratings in the single digits. Depending on how questions are phrased, pro-US attitudes have inched into double digits and there is hearty public approval of enhanced intelligence cooperation in the fight against the PKK. In each case, it is pinned to the positive results from PM Erdogan's November 5 meeting with President Bush, later consolidated by President Gul's January 8 White House meeting. We will have to work hard to solidify these gains, which can easily slip if PKK attacks spike with the spring thaw. None of the polls are based on true nationwide random sampling, but the firms reported below enjoyed reasonably good reputations in Turkey. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

¶2. (SBU) Since PM Erdogan's November 5 Oval Office meeting when President Bush labeled the PKK a "common enemy," the US image in Turkey has begun to rebound. Prominent GOT officials are now willing to go on the record about the positives of the relationship, building on the decidedly positive signals from December public opinion surveys. Speaking on CNN-Turk on January 2, unofficial presidential advisor Ahmet Davutoglu offered some of his most positive public language ever on the US. Bilateral relations, he stated, had moved onto very healthy ground on which problems are debated, and even when there are disagreements, there is still cooperation. President Gul noted in his flight to the US before meeting with President Bush January 8 that "the US is Turkey's most important ally." His White House visit was extensively and warmly covered in the Turkish media.

¶3. (C) Contacts in political circles have been vocally appreciative of US intelligence support in combating the PKK. They both thank us and tell us it has made all the difference in turning around public sentiment. At the same time, they express their expectation that the current levels of cooperation will continue and result in the capture of PKK leaders.

¶4. (SBU) In a survey conducted last week related to us by Pollmark, 15 percent of respondents viewed the US positively, up from 11 percent in December and 5 percent in mid-2007.

Pollmark's December 2007 poll on issues related to the national agenda, conducted in 26 provinces among 1566 people, reports the following findings about the US:

How do you find US' providing intelligence support to Turkey in the operations against Northern Iraq?

57.9 percent - positive
28.7 percent - negative
13.4 percent - no idea

Do you think the US administration supports the PKK?

73.1 percent - yes
13.9 percent - no
13.0 percent - no idea

What kind of view do you have about the US?

11.0 percent - positive
77.9 percent - negative
11.1 percent - no idea

15. (SBU) Metropoll's December 2007 telephone survey of 1242 adults in 26 provinces, with a margin of error of 3 percentage points and a 95 percent confidence level, asked "Do you believe the USA's support to Turkey in dealing with PKK terror is adequate?"

69.3 percent - no
26.2 percent - yes
4.5 percent - don't know..

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>

WILSON